

Mimulus Memo



SEPTEMBER 2021

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EVENTS

OCTOBER

16 – Chapter Plant Sale, CSUB
9 am - 1 pm
21 – Zoom Program, 4 pm

DECEMBER
No meetings

“WOW” MOMENTS: WILDFLOWER STAND-OUTS, SPRING 2021

by Nancy Nies

IN THIS YEAR OF EXTREME DROUGHT, PAUL AND I DIDN'T EXPECT to see many wildflowers this spring on the weekly day-trips we've been making since March 2020. It's true that in the spring of 2021 we did not see the vast expanses of color we saw last spring, such as the Antelope Valley, with its bright-orange carpet of California poppies, and the fields along Shell Creek Road, thick with lupine, tidy tips, desert dandelion, and owl's clover.

Nevertheless, we did experience a number of “wow” moments this spring, each one remarkable not only for the particular wildflower that stole the show on a given day, but also for because of the spectacular setting in which we found it. Here are ten examples, in chronological order:



All photos courtesy Nancy Nies

1 - *Eriogonum deflexum* (flat-top buckwheat), Red Rock Canyon - 1 January 2021

1 - 1 JANUARY - **Nightmare Gulch, Red Rock Canyon State Park:**
On this New Year's Day, amidst the colorful, otherworldly rock formations, we found much *Eriogonum deflexum* (flat-top buckwheat), but only one bearing deep-pink flowers — the only plant we saw all day that was not still “hibernating”.



2 - 10 FEBRUARY - **Gorman Post Road:**
This back-road is set against the hills behind Gorman — hills famed for their incredible wildflower displays in good years. In early February of a drought year, you would not expect to see flowers, but on this day, a flash of bright orange at the roadside caught our eye. It was our first sighting this year of *Eschscholzia californica* (California poppy). The plant's dozen vibrant blooms seemed to defy the drought and signal the start of spring.

2 - *Eschscholzia californica* (California poppy), Gorman Post Road - 10 February 2021

3 - 31 MARCH - Wallace Creek area, Carrizo Plain National Monument:



3 - *Eremalche parryi* subsp. *kernensis* (**Kern mallow**), Carrizo Plain - 31 March 2021

Hiking across the seemingly barren hills flanking the east side of the monument, we took in breathtaking vistas of the Carrizo and Soda Lake. While looking for a lunch spot, we nearly missed seeing the small pinkish-lavender blooms at our feet. Excitedly discovering more, we realized that we had found a colony of a rare endemic, *Eremalche parryi* subsp. *kernensis* (**Kern mallow**).



4 - *Diplacus pictus* (**calico monkeyflower**), foothills near Woody - 2 April 2021

4 - 2 APRIL - Foothills near Woody:

Our hosts on this sunny spring morning were **Lucy Clark** and **Clyde Golden**, who showed us the thriving population of *Diplacus pictus*, formerly *Mimulus pictus* (**calico monkeyflower**), surrounding a group of boulders on their land. A short climb rewarded us with the opportunity both to see this rare species in bloom and to enjoy panoramic views of the green foothills.

5 - 16 APRIL - Sand Ridge Wildflower Preserve:

On previous spring visits to Sand Ridge, we had missed the bloom-time of another rare endemic — the **Bakersfield cactus** — and hadn't even been



aware of how abundant it was in that place. This year, however, the invasive grasses and mustard had been cleared away, giving us an unobstructed view of dozens of clumps of *Opuntia basilaris* var. *treleasei*, their intense magenta blooms

5 - *Opuntia basilaris* var. *treleasei*, (**Bakersfield cactus**), Sand Ridge - 16 April 2021

vivid against a backdrop of mountains and farmland.

6 - 21 APRIL - Lehigh Trails, Tehachapi:

Our hike on this windy day, overlooking the Tehachapi Valley, afforded not only beautiful scenery but also more flowers than expected, including

paintbrush, blue dicks, wallflower, and phacelia.

The stand-out, however, was a clump of *Balsamorhiza sagittata* (**arrowleaf balsamroot**) in full bloom. With

its bright-green leaves and large yellow flowers contrasting with the brown, bone-dry hillside from which it grew, it was the eye-catcher of the day.



6 - *Balsamorhiza sagittata* (**arrowleaf balsamroot**), Lehigh Trails, Tehachapi - 21 April 2021

7 - 20 MAY

Greenhorn Range:

Exploring along a dirt road, in a forested area on the south side of Cooks Peak, we came upon **checkerbloom, wallflower, lupine**, and another rare endemic,

Calochortus westonii (**Shirley Meadows star tulip**). Last but certainly not least, we found what we'd been searching for—our second rare endemic sighting of the day—a healthy specimen of *Fritillaria brandegeei* (**Greenhorn fritillary**), with no fewer than seven showy flowers gracing its long stem.



7 - *Fritillaria brandegeei* (**Greenhorn fritillary**), Greenhorn Range, Cooks Peak - 20 May 2021

8 - 2 JUNE

Breckenridge Road:

8 - *Penstemon grinnelli* (Grinnell's beardtongue), Breckenridge Road - 2 June 2021

us — *Penstemon grinnelli* (Grinnell's beardtongue), with blooms resembling pink mouths with hairy yellow tongues.

A drive over Breckenridge Mountain, starting in Bakersfield and returning via Walker Basin, offers impressive views of foothills, mountains and valleys. On this day, we also saw stands of farewell-to-spring, yerba santa, dwarf monkey-flower, prickly poppy and California poppy. On the mountain's east side, a surprise awaited

9 - 16 JUNE

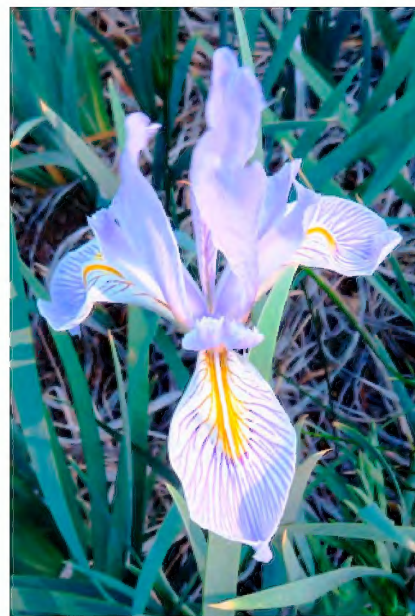
Rancheria Road, between Bakersfield and Oak Flat Lookout:

9 - *Aesculus californica* (California buckeye), Rancheria Road - 16 June 2021

This section of the road, as it climbs from the treeless lower elevations, winds its way through hills thick with *Aesculus californica* (California buckeye). As the road climbs, the buckeye gives way to blue oak, and the oak to Jeffrey pine — each lovely in its own way. On this June day, however, the buckeye was at peak bloom, and its rounded outlines, highlighted by the morning sun, were stunning.

10 - 30 June, Mt. Pinos:

That day, along the trail to the summit of Mt. Pinos, we were to spot yarrow, penstemon, phlox, and mariposa lilies, along with various species of lupine and paintbrush. First, though, we visited the meadow just below the trailhead, in hopes of finding a good showing of *Iris missouriensis* (western blue flag) blooming there--and we weren't disappointed!



10 - *Iris missouriensis* (western blue flag), Mt. Pinos - 30 June 2021

Some of the above were commonly seen California natives, while others were rare and endangered endemics. Some were "old friends," while others were new to us. Some, we made a point of looking for, while others, we just happened upon. Some were striking in appearance, while others were subtle. All, however, were unforgettable. Nature, despite the drought, still managed to "wow" us with wildflowers in the spring of 2021. 🌸



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NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

CNPS is the leader for providing reliable information on California native plants and plant conservation. Comprehensive information about California's flora and vegetation communities is available throughout the state for conservation and educational purposes. CNPS's leadership influences personal ethics and actions, as well as public policy for native plant protection.

President's Message:

by Rich Spjut

I-Plants of the Kern River Parkway Preserve

DURING APRIL AND MAY, DON TURKAL, Diane Mitchell and myself, accompanied by Bill Cooper and Eddy Laine, completed a preliminary survey of plants along ~4.1 miles of the **Kern River** — from the eastern boundary of **Hart Park** upstream to ~200 meters beyond the **Pyles Camp** parking area— near the southeastern boundary of the **Kern River Golf Course**. We prepared a list documenting species we observed in the new preserve that we arbitrarily divided into **four sections**:

Hart Park
CALM
Lake Ming
Pyles Camp

[This checklist](#)¹ of the new **Kern River Parkway Preserve** is posted on our chapter website (kern.cnps.org) with links to **Calflora** showing photos that I took during the survey, including a few from the **Panorama Vista Preserve**. Endnotes mention the dates field surveys were made, and the taxonomy applied to distinguish problem species, especially in the genera *Salix* and *Sambucus*. The list is considered preliminary because it was very dry this past winter/ spring, and that we often walked along the dry side of the riparian vegetation. Native spring annuals were rare. Including trees, shrubs, and perennials, we recorded 118 species, ~75% of them native.

Much of the riparian vegetation is a narrow strip of secondary growth of shrubs with emergent or remaining trees of **Fremont cottonwood** (*Populus fremontii*), **California sycamore** (*Platanus racemosa*), **Goodding's willow** (*Salix gooddingii*), and **blue elder** (*Sambucus*



Photo: Wikimedia Commons

Cephalanthus occidentalis, common buttonbush or button willow.

mexicana) that extend into the extensive exotic grassland. Broad areas of riparian vegetation occasionally occur in patches, especially around **Lake Ming** and near **Hart Park**. In the shrub understory, or dominant in shrub alliances, are **arroyo willow** (*Salix lasiolepis*), **mule fat** (*Baccharis salicifolia*), **elders** (*Sambucus* spp.), and **button-willow** (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*).

Mule fat, generally common throughout the preserve, formed thickets along much of the river margin nearly half-way from the Pyles Camp area downstream to Lake Ming. An extensive **arrow-weed** (*Pluchea sericea*) patch in the western Hart Park Region was shown on a Google Earth map in the last *Mimulus Memo*, and **polished willow** (*Salix laevigata*) was frequent just east of Lake Ming. Common perennial herbs throughout the preserve were **tarragon** (*Artemisia dracunculoides*), **silver wormwood** (*A. douglasiana*), and **stinging nettle** (*Urtica dioica* subsp. *holosericea*). In the swampy areas were **tule** (*Schoenoplectus acutus* var. *occidentalis*), various **rush** (*Juncus* spp.), and **panicked bulrush** (*Scirpus microcarpus*). Native grasses such as



Photos courtesy Rich Spjut

Left: Mule fat (*Baccharis salicifolia*) showing thickets along the Kern River Parkway Preserve between Lake Ming and Pyles Camp. **Above:** Close-up of leaves and flowers.

annual beard grass (*Polypogon monspeliensis*) was often near the river margin, and away from the river was beardless **wild rye** (*Elymus triticoides*).

Among the nonnative woody species, **to-bacco bush** (*Nicotiana glauca*) is common along the river edge in all sections. Localized thickets were observed for **tree of heaven** (*Ailanthus altissima*) in the **Lake Ming** section, **Athel tamarisk** (*Tamarix aphylla*) near the upstream limits of the preserve, and **Mexican palo verde** (*Parinsonia aculeata*) near east boundary of Hart Park and northwest corner of Lake Ming. Another non-native tree, **Mexican fan palm** (*Washingtonia robusta*), occurs sporadically along the river. Among the rush species, we discovered a new invasive species to Kern County, *Juncus usitatus*, native to Australia, New Zealand and New Caledonia; otherwise, reported further north in the valley. A nonnative nettle, generally not recognized in our flora (e.g., **The Jepson Manual**; Moe, **Kern County Flora**), *Urtica dioica* ssp.



Juncus usitatus, invasive species, native to Australia, New Zealand and New Caledonia discovered during our Chapter survey along the Kern River Parkway Preserve north of Lake Ming, showing plant and close up of fissuricidal capsules.

dioica, forms a continuous herb layer within a narrow zone in the understory of sycamore-cotton forest fragments along a canal paralleling Manor Drive at the southern limits of the **Panorama Vista Preserve**. Its identification was based on illustrations in the **Flora of North America** (D. E. Boufford, Vol. 3: 400-04, 1997), while it has also been reported in Kern County by others (**Calflora**, accessed July 2021).

Tree and bush savanna occupy extensive areas beyond the riparian alliances. The exotic (nonnative) grasses are usually *Bromus* spp. and *Hordeum murinum*. Various nonnative mustards often grow with them. The scattered trees or shrubs are occasionally **Good-ding's willow** and more often **elder(berry)**, especially drier soils.

Most elder "stands reflect past disturbance patterns through



Photos courtesy Rich Spjut



Blow-up of indicated area at left.

Comparison:

Washingtonia filifera and Washingtonia robusta:

Washingtonia filifera —

Top Left — Palm Canyon in the San Jacinto Mts. south of Palm Springs, CA. **Top Right** — Mouth of Kern River Canyon, *Ephedra californica* in foreground. Observe pale (silvery) green color of leaves in both photos.

Washingtonia robusta —

Bottom Left: Palms along the Kern River Parkway Preserve, between Hart Park and CALM. Leaves green but not reflective. **Right** — Close view of green leaves persisting along the columnar shoot for a short distance, in contrast to *W. filifera* leaves radiating out from just the apical area of the stem.

flooding or clearing,” although elder alliances were not shown to occur in Kern County ([A Manual of California Vegetation](#), Sawyer et al., 2009, CNPS). The **Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle**, a federally listed endangered and threatened species, lives exclusively on elders, but apparently not in Kern County. Indeed, in 2010, Bakersfield spent \$350,000 or more “to transplant an elderberry shrub in the pathway of the Westside freeway to a shrub ranch in Northern California,” only to later find out there was no proof of the bug’s existence (LOIS HENRY: [Oops, wrong beetle! May we get a refund? Bakersfield.com](#)², Sep 14, 2014, Sep 28, 2016).

Additionally, I suggest there is more than one elder species in elder-willow alliances. At Pyles Camp parking, **Bill Cooper** and I counted leaflets on elders ranging from 3 to 9 that included even-numbers of leaflets per leaf. Elder leaves generally have 5 or 7 leaflets throughout the preserve, 5 among willow alliances

mens for each species. The classification follows [The Jepson Manual](#) (1st ed.). I scanned the list as a pdf document and placed it on our chapter website under “Checklists”. The herbarium list was reportedly last updated January 1997, while the date of January 1996 is indicated on the first page.

III-Adobe House Project Meeting, July 24

I had earlier attended a meeting in place of **Don Turkal**. Three of our chapter members attended July 24, myself, **Diane Mitchell** and **Suzanne Weller**. Diane and I each introduced ourselves. My introduction included our chapter’s contribution to a preliminary checklist of plants we completed along the Kern River Parkway Preserve.

In previous chapter e-mail discussions on our chapter’s involvement in the **Adobe House Project**, it was not clear as to how we might contribute to exhibits,

or what the relationship of restoring the Adobe House was to a proposed native garden. In review of the documents handed out at the Adobe House meetings, the Adobe House is stated to be a nature center that will be open four days a week “where visitors can take a self-guided walking tour and learn about local indigenous flora and fauna.” However, both Don and I have independently questioned exhibiting plants from other California ecoregions that, with few exceptions, do not occur naturally along the Kern River

Parkway Preserve.

The exhibits are proposed to be “about the natural history of the Kern River Parkway, from its origins as inland seas to its present day form.” “The purpose... is to increase understanding of the geological, biological and cultural history of the region with focus on the Kern River Parkway alignment from I-5 at the west end to the east end near the Kern Canyon portal.”

Visitors besides those that normally visit Hart Park would include tours for elementary school children. Members of our chapter who wish to contribute exhibits should keep in mind that space is limited and that exhibits will be rotating. 🌸



1 https://kern.cnps.org/images/2021_CNPS_Kern_River_Preserve_Family_List_5_2021_1.pdf

2 https://www.bakersfield.com/columnists/lois_henry/lois-henry-oops-wrong-beetle-may-we-get-a-refund/article_390e6e1b-7a67-5db4-9e24-3bdae982722.html

3 <https://kern.cnps.org/images/Bakersfield-College-Herbarium-List>



Left: *Sambucus mexicana*, plant with inflorescence in early development, distinguished by the leaflets strongly folded upwards, and by the inflorescence and glabrous stems. **Right:** *Sambucus velutina* in fruit, the berry-like drupes blue; the inflorescence differs in this species by having hairy flowering stems.

and elder savannas, or 7 in understory of patchy forests. The localized variation near Pyles Camp parking would seem to be evidence of hybridization involving more than one species.

In the Hart Park section Bill Cooper noted that **valley oak** (*Quercus lobata*), **Douglas oak** (*Q. douglasii*), **interior live oak** (*Q. wislizeni*), **Hind’s walnut** (*Juglans hindsii*), and **Oregon ash** (*Fraxinus latifolia*) were planted 20 or more years ago along an irrigation line that needed repair. **Hind’s walnut** and **interior live oak** are suspected to have since spread closer to the river, while the occurrence of **Oregon ash** along the river is natural.

II-The BC Herbarium

[List of the Bakersfield College Herbarium Plant Species](#)³ by family / genus / species and number of specimens for each species. This list, 27 pages, accounts for 4,019 herbarium specimens classified by family (108) / genus (487) / species (1,199), and the number of speci-



Thank You to:

... **Christina Varnava**, of California Botanical Gardens, for showing us the beauty and variety of the flora of the Sespe Watershed.

... **Ryan O'Dell**, from the BLM Central Coast Field Office for sharing the oft-overlooked flora of the San Joaquin Desert. 🌸

Chapter ZOOM Meetings

upcoming TOPICS

October 21, 2021 — 4 pm

Presenter: **Brooke Stutz**,

Staff Biologist, Padre Associates

Topic: *Harry Potter's Muggle's Guide to Native Plants*

REGISTER for these events:

E-mail **Paul Gipe** (pgipe@igc.org)

Security Notes:

1. Please arrive early. Late arrivals admitted at discretion of host.
2. Use your real name, NOT a screen name, alias or name of your device.
3. Do NOT share the link to meeting with anyone. 🌸

Dear Rich, Monica, Dinah, Paul,
and CNPS Kern Chapter,

Thank you for your \$300 donation to Calflora received on August 27, 2021 providing a portion of the match for our Fall Fundraiser. As a non-profit organization, we rely on CNPS Chapter support to maintain the Calflora database as an unparalleled community resource.

With your Chapter's help, Calflora continues to provide the most accessible and up-to-date information for over 10,000 California wild plants. Whether you use Calflora to find what's blooming on your favorite hiking trail, check scientific name spelling, or crosswalk old and new plant names, Calflora is here for you.

Thank you for being there for Calflora.

Sincerely,

Cynthia

Cynthia Powell, Executive Director
<https://www.calflora.org>



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The Kern Chapter of the
 California Native Plant Society meets
 the third Thursday of each month at:
 Kern County Superintendent of Schools
 City Centre, Room 1A or 1B
 1300 17th Street, Bakersfield, CA.
 Chapter website:

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Inside this Issue:

WOW MOMENTS

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THE BAKERSFIELD COLLEGE HERBARIUM